

LAND OWNERSHIP IN APPLIEDORE, 1500–1900

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Thanks to the survival of three excellent estate maps, made in 1625, 1832 and about 1880, the ownership of nearly all the land in Appledore is known from 1600 to 1900. Land holdings are also recorded for much earlier periods in the manorial records, wills, etc. All these documents show remarkable continuity and stability, due to the conservative management of the manor which owned the whole parish and was, from Saxon times onwards, in the hands of the Church, first the monks of Canterbury and, after the Reformation, the Dean and Chapter.

Two early decisions of the monks contributed greatly to this stability. The first was to keep under their own close control the best land in the parish, including most of the marsh which they had inned. The greater part of this holding has survived until very recent times in a single unit known as Court Lodge farm. The second decision was to allow the tenure of most of the rest of the parish to pass into the possession of the powerful Horne family and, after them, to the equally influential Chutes and their successors. Both decisions resulted in stable land management.

The Court Lodge land almost certainly included much of the manor's original demesne and a great deal of the area reclaimed from the salt water of the Rother estuary which had till then flooded the levels between Appledore and Oxney. The reclaimed land provided first-class grazing, but, even so, demesne land farmed by the Steward of the Manor, based on the Court Lodge, became in time unprofitable on this, as on other manors. The monks decided to put in as tenants rich yeoman farmers who could be relied on to live on the farm, to work the land profitably, and to pay the rent and all the labourers required.

A lease survives from 1513 (there may have been earlier ones) which let the Court Lodge and its farm for £55 2s. 9d. a year to William Brockhill. The lease included dead and live stock, though not nearly enough of the latter – 40 ewes and 50 lambs. He died

before the end of his lease and his will, proved 1520 (P.C.C. 25 Aylofffe) shows not only that he was rich, but also that he was very much an Appledore man. He left a generous endowment to pay for a school in the village, and for a priest to help the vicar on Sundays and to teach in the school on working days. Other leases survive showing that the holdings remained unchanged and that the tenants were all the same type – well-to-do yeomen. The last of these tenants holding the land direct from the manor were Richard Ashenden and his son William. Richard left a will proved in 1565 which left his interest in the manor of Appledore to his son and shows that in his lifetime he had allowed his relative to farm Cowlease and Shirley Moor, both in the area leased to him by Canterbury.

After 1588 policy changed. The Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, who for some years by then had become Lords of the Manor, decided to stop letting the land to working tenants and to install rich absentees paying a capital sum and a yearly rent of £59 2s. 9d. (only £4 more than that paid by William Brockhill in 1513). The absentee tenants were left to get what rent they could from working farmers. A number of such rich absentee landlords held the Court Lodge farm. Thomas Diggs, a great public figure in Queen Elizabeth's reign, heads the list. Queen Elizabeth herself held the lease for a time, and the Dean and Chapter were rapped over the knuckles by Secretary Walsingham for being sticky over the lease. They had to explain that their attitude was caused 'not by obstinacy but respect for their statutes'. (The original vellum lease to her was bought in 1924 by the Elizabethan Society of Boston, U.S.A.) Thomas Culpepper was another to hold the lease. By 1680, it was in the hands of the Hulse family who were to receive a baronetcy for the services of Sir Edward Hulse as physician to George II. His most famous descendant was Field-Marshal Sir Samuel Hulse, the leading member of the Prince Regent's household. The Hulses were to hold the lease of Court Lodge for over 200 years.

The policy of the Dean and Chapter was clear – to lease land only to persons of established position and repute who could be relied upon to pick working tenants who would keep the land well farmed. This is clearly shown when the working tenants can be identified from the start of the eighteenth century. From the Vicar's tything book for 1725 which still survives (in my custody) we know that in that year William Munk, senior, was the tenant of Court Lodge farm. His descendants were to keep the tenancy till shortly before 1815. After a short gap the Cock family were to be installed and to remain till the start of the twentieth century, so that two great farming families were to work the land for over two centuries,

renting their land from the Hulse family. Both the Munks and the Cocks were wealthy and had the reputation of being the leading graziers on the Marsh. None was more successful than George Munk, tenant till 1815. His landlord, Sir Samuel Hulse, was proud to introduce him to all notables then fostering the new agricultural practices. He took him to the House of Lords to meet the agricultural peers and brought the Duke of Bedford down to spend three nights at George Munk's house, the original Court Lodge built by Prior Goldstone in about 1500, which must have looked much like the lodge he built at Ebony, which still survives. All this was too much for George Munk. His success went to his head. He went bankrupt and there was no member of the family to succeed him. The Hulses were lucky to find the Cocks to renew the tradition of wealthy and experienced graziers in charge of one of the finest sheep farms in the land.

Alas the great partnership of the Hulses and their tenant farmers was to come to an end! In 1888, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners took over the landed estates of the Church. With their new approach they thought it very bad business to accept a nominal rent of £59 2s. 9d., leaving the Hulses to get a net revenue of far more than this. It was worth their while to pay the Hulses £14,000 to secure the freehold and to let their architect loose to build the Victorian house which took the place of the Tudor Court Lodge and to put in a tenant paying a full market rent. It was at this juncture that the map of about this date was prepared.

The map shows that in 1880 the land must have looked much as it had been for four hundred years. The boundaries were much as they had been defined in the Tudor leases. Shirley Moor had indeed been let off to Sir William Hales some time before Cogger's map was made in 1625. The rest of the land, some 450 acres, and the dykes which bounded it would have been familiar to William Brockhill, with only one big change to surprise him. In 1805, the Royal Military Canal had severed the land on the marsh. Most, but not all, of the medieval field names survived. Little Chapel Hook (the chapel being Fairfield), Cowlease and Pykes are in the Tudor leases. Millfield still identifies the field where the mill mentioned in William Brockhill's lease stood till the eighteenth century.

Ecclesiastical ownership had been conservative. It had at least kept its best land unchanged, fertile and profitable all this time.

The Dean and Chapter's policy of leasing to absentee notables resulted in other similar transactions at the start of the sixteenth century affecting other parts of the manor. The evidence comes from Cogger's map of 1625 and the account books kept by the collectors of the manor's fee farm and quit rents in 1646 and 1768.

The first two sources show comparatively small holdings held by a number of distinguished persons.

1. Sir Edward Hales, Knight and Baronet of Tenterden, held three detached parcels (some 50 acres in all).
2. Sir John Baker, Knight and Baronet, of Sissinghurst, had some 50 acres. Presumably he descended from 'Bloody Baker', Chancellor of the Exchequer to three Tudor monarchs, and so called from his record of executing the faithful, Protestant and Catholic alike.
3. The Earl of Westmorland held part of Shirley Moor.
4. Sir Anthony Mayney, Knight, of Linton, later ruined for his loyalty to Charles I, had two holdings in what is now Park Farm.
5. Sir Edward Ratcliffe, Knight, had two important holdings one on each side of the Street of Appledore.

This impressive collection of nobility and gentry ends with two commoners – William Walter, Gent, who had a small parcel on Park Farm, and Shemiah Selherst of Tenterden who had an important site on the Street.

Three, but only three, locally established gentry held land of the Manor. Thomas Huckstep, whose family has many entries in the Parish Register from 1581 to 1636, held a large field on which the playing-field now stands. 'Woolball, Gent' of a family established in Appledore in medieval times and last recorded in baptismal entries of 1637–9, farmed and lived at Gusborne, still one of the larger farms in the parish. Finally, there are the 'heirs of Knell, Gent', one of whom, Mr. James Knell was buried in 1726. He held a big farm adjoining Gusborne.

All this made up a fascinating patchwork, resulting from what was clearly a conviction of the Dean and Chapter's agents that blue or at least gentle blood was required to secure proper charge of the Cathedral's land.

Alas for this policy! Though all these names appear, as having paid their quit rents, in the collector's book of 1646, none of them occur in the similar return of 1768. No noblemen, no knights, no gentlemen are shown as holding land, except for the heirs of Sir Edward Austen, Bart. (see later), and the heirs of Samuel Crosswell who certainly regarded himself as entitled to the arms engraved on the massive stone above his grave in the church. In general, the Dean and Chapter had now to deal directly with working farmers.

One large estate, however, remained, which was to absorb many of the smaller holdings described above, where Canterbury was able to maintain the principle of having a person of repute and substance

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to have charge of their land. This was the land which the great Horne family had held from the manor since they settled in Appledore in the fourteenth century. Members of the family were to hold office as Commissioner for the suppression of the 1381 rising, as Sheriffs, as Knights of the Shire. Edward IV granted a pension to the widow of the Horne who died at Towton, and the Hornes might have been as powerful under the Tudors as under the Plantagenets, had it not been for their support of the House of York. This and the devotion to the Old Church of the last heiress of the Hornes, Benet Horne, led to her being declared recusant and the estate was soon in the hands of the Chutes, another powerful family. It has been suggested that Philip Chute, who first acquired it, got it as a gift from Henry VIII. Philip had been Captain of the Gentlemen-at-Arms at the siege of Boulogne, and Henry had made him Captain of Camber Castle, with a pension attached. However, Philip says in his will (P.C.C. 3 Sheffield), which he made on 1st March, 1565, that the lands in Appledore and Kenardington or elsewhere in Kent which he bequeathed to his eldest son George, he had bought from John Harper, Gent.

However he got it, it was a large estate, and there is no reason to think that it was any smaller in the time of the Hornes. By 1635 Edward Chute, of Bethersden, to which the family had moved, leaving Horne's Place to house a farm tenant, owned some 550 acres of farm land and a great deal of woodland. This is all shown in the lovely estate map which Ambrose Cogger drew for him in that year. 77 parcels of land are shown, each with its acreage marked. Unfortunately, the schedule with the field names is missing, but the system of enumeration makes it possible to identify, if only roughly, the main farms still to this day on the estate.

Sir George Chute, Bart., of Bethersden, was the last of the family to hold the Appledore estates. In his will, made June 2nd, 1759, he left it to Sir Edward Austen, Bart., of Tenterden, who died childless in 1760. His widow bequeathed it to her niece, the wife of Liberty Taylor of Maidstone. The Liberty Taylors eventually petered out, two bachelor brothers dying in turn, leaving Miss Taylor of Hastings the last to hold the property. On her death in 1882 it was broken up, and the farms were bought for the most part by the sitting tenants. This was the only occasion for three hundred years that the estate changed ownership other than by inheritance. It was when the family were contemplating a sale (it did not take place) that Messrs. Driver in 1832 made the map and description of the property which shows the extent of the estate at that time.

A comparison of Cogger's and Driver's maps is instructive. Cogger's acreage totals 554, Driver's 960, both excluding woodland

of some 200 acres. A detailed comparison of the two maps and the two sets of acreage shows that the estate lost very little land in the two centuries and gained quite a lot – in two ways. First, it absorbed the land which had been let by the manor to Lord Westmorland, Sir Edward Hales, Sir Anthony Mayney and Mr. William Walter. Secondly, it enlarged its holdings in the Dowels – the low-lying marsh, most of which was severed when the Royal Military Canal was dug. Field boundaries were altered very little. Cogger shows 77 fields, Driver, with a larger acreage, 127. Horne's Farm in particular, apart from the severance by the canal and the additional land in the Dowels, has almost exactly the same field pattern and acreages. So do most of the farms. All these are still known today by the same names – Horne's, Greenfield (the farmhouse has been demolished), Park, Redhill, Griffin and Boon. Nearly every field in Driver's long list is given its full name (and nearly all have proper names). Even greater detail is given, including the names of previous occupants, in a rough root of title to the estate. Few of these field names are now in current use.

Court Lodge Farm and the Horne or Chute estate between them accounted for the greater part of the farmland in Appledore. The Ecclesiastical Lords of the Manor and the absentee landlords to whom they entrusted the management of their land may not have been the most enterprising of land managers. But, at least, they kept the land in the same ownership till the sales at the end of the nineteenth century ended the connection established by the Saxon kings. Today the *latifundia* of modern farming have swept away many of the field boundaries and nearly all the field names. If you stand, however, on Chapel Bank at Ebony, 99 ft. above sea level, you see a landscape which would have been familiar hundreds of years ago.

The majority of the manorial documents on which this article is based are in the Cathedral Library at Canterbury, in the Appledore Manor series. Cogger's map and a copy of Driver's are in the County Archives Office.